

F R O M	NAME & TITLE	Todd Carter <i>Todd A. Carter</i> Chief Information Officer	CITY of	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Baltimore City Office of Information & Technology 401 E. Fayette Street, 3rd floor	BALTIMORE	
	SUBJECT	24-0583 The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore	M E M O	

October 9, 2024

TO: The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
Room 400 City Hall
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

Position: Support

Background

The Baltimore City Office of Information and Technology (BCIT) has completed its review of CCB 24-0583, The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore. The purpose of this bill is to review, revise, and adopt the 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore as well as to provide for a special effective date.

Analysis

BCIT is working to implement equitable access to residents as outlined in CCB 24-0583, The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore. In order to meet the goals set forth in the comprehensive plan, our Office of Broadband and Digital Equity (BDE) is working to eliminate the root cause of broadband inequality by building ubiquitous, open access fiber infrastructure to enable digital access for all residents in accordance with its mission. BDE seeks to increase the availability of secure high-speed internet, computing devices, digital skills training, and technical support while prioritizing neighborhoods with low levels of digital equity.

In FY24, BDE has already taken steps to close the digital divide for all Baltimore City residents and employees including:

- The publication of the *Digital Inclusion Strategy*, a five-year plan aimed at improving access to technology, fostering economic opportunity, reducing disparities, and helping residents succeed in life.
- The planned delivery of *internet connectivity in public housing* in partnership with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City via \$9M grant from the Maryland Office of Statewide Broadband for last-mile infrastructure expansion to eight public housing locations and an additional \$15M investment from HABC. The grant will impact over 4,000 households.
- Launch of *Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)* awareness campaign in collaboration with 20+ partner organizations with assistance from the Office of Statewide Broadband, Baltimore. More than 80,000 households enrolled in the ACP, resulting in a 65% adoption rate, compared to the Maryland (37%) and national (44%) adoption rate.

- Establishment of Baltimore City's free public Wi-Fi network (FreeBmoreWiFi) and an interactive coverage map. The network is currently accessible at all 46 operational recreation centers, five senior centers, and one pilot public Wi-Fi zone in West Baltimore's Upton neighborhood with all nine of the city's Main Streets, additional senior centers, and neighborhoods in scope for FY25.
- Development of digital skills training classes for Baltimore City employees in partnership with labor unions and the Baltimore City Department of Human Resources who now administers the training to employees.
- Distribution of over 35,000 Chromebooks to low-income households in partnership with the Enoch Pratt Library.
- Award of \$900k in grants through the ARPA-funded Digital Equity Fund to 22 nonprofit organizations resulting in more the 1,000 city residents receiving digital skills training and resources.

Fiscal Impact

The City of Baltimore invested \$30 million of ARPA funds for the purpose of broadband expansion through infrastructure deployment and for use and adoption of activities and innovative programs to close the digital divide and inequities through digital inclusion.

The prioritization of the \$30M was allocated to the following areas:

- \$20.6M for Broadband and Infrastructure
- \$5M for Digital Equity Fund Community Subgrant Program
- \$4.4M to Enoch Pratt (managed by the Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs)

Conclusion

BCIT supports CCB 24-0583, The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore. If you have any questions, please contact Leyla Layman, Chief of Staff, at (443) 202-4511.

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations